Amendment to the Claims:

1. (previously presented): A process to intentionally degrade original digital data comprising steps of:

searching the original digital data for detection criteria; and

after locating detection criteria, adjusting at least one neighboring point associated with the detection criteria, wherein the original digital data is degraded in quality by said adjusting step, but the original digital data is recoverable from the intentionally degraded digital data.

2. (previously presented): The process of claim 1 in which the detection criteria comprises a pseudo-random sequence.

3. (previously presented): The process of claim 1 in which the adjustment of the at least one neighboring point involves a pseudo-random sequence.

4. (previously presented): The process in claim 1 in which the detection criteria includes a threshold crossing.

5. - 15. (canceled)

16. (previously presented): An apparatus comprising:

a logic processor; and

a storage unit comprising means for analyzing digital content, wherein the digital content

has been transformed with a self-synchronizing degradation from an original state of the digital

content, and means for recovering the original state of the digital content from the self-

synchronized degraded digital content.

17 – 20. (canceled)

21. (currently amended): A method of restoring ~~self-synchronization of~~ degraded

digital content, wherein the degraded digital content comprises degradation from an original state

of the digital content, said method comprising: ~~the steps of:~~

analyzing the degraded digital content to identify a plurality of detection criteria, wherein

for each of the plurality of detection criteria there exists in the degraded digital content a group

of neighboring points; and

for each group of neighboring points, adjusting each member of a group of neighboring

points according to a predetermined process, wherein the predetermined process corresponds

with a process used to degrade the digital content from the original state, and wherein said

adjusting step helps to restore the degraded digital content to the original state.

22. (previously presented): The method of claim 21, wherein the group comprises at

least one neighboring point.

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23. (previously presented): The method of claim 21, wherein the plurality of detection criteria comprises a pseudo-random sequence.

24. (previously presented): The method of claim 21, wherein the plurality of detection criteria includes a threshold crossing.

25. (previously presented): The method of claim 21, wherein the predetermined process is an inverse of the process used to degrade the digital content from the original state.

26. (previously presented): The method of claim 21, wherein the digital content comprises audio content.

27. (previously presented): The method of claim 21, wherein the digital content comprises video content.

28. (previously presented): The method of claim 21, wherein the digital content comprises image content.

29. (currently amended): The method of claim 21, wherein the degraded digital content is intentionally degraded <u>in a manner which does not convey information</u>.

30. (currently amended): A method of <u>restoring</u> <s>self-synchronization of</s> intentionally

degraded digital content, wherein the intentionally degraded digital content comprises intentional

degradation from an original state of the digital content, said method comprising: ~~the steps of:~~

analyzing the intentionally degraded digital content to identify a plurality of detection

criteria; and

for each of the plurality of detection criteria, adjusting the intentionally degraded digital

content according to a predetermined process, wherein the predetermined process corresponds

with a process used to intentionally degrade the digital content from the original state, <u>and</u>

<u>wherein said adjusting step restores the intentionally degraded digital content to the original</u>

<u>state</u>.

31. (canceled)

32. (previously presented): The method of claim 30, wherein for each of the plurality of

detection criteria there exists in the degraded digital content a group of neighboring points,

wherein said adjusting step comprises for each group adjusting each member of the group of

neighboring points.

33. (previously presented): The method of claim 30, wherein the digital content

comprises audio.

34. (previously presented): The method of claim 30, wherein the digital content

comprises video.

35. (previously presented): The method of claim 16, wherein said means for recovering the original state of the digital content comprises means for analyzing the degraded digital content to identify a plurality of detection criteria, and means for adjusting for each of the detection criteria the degraded digital content according to a predetermined process.

36. (previously presented): The method of claim 35, wherein the predetermined process corresponds with a process used to degrade the digital content from the original state.

37. (previously presented): The method of claim 36, and wherein said adjusting means helps to restore the degraded digital content to the original state.

38. (previously presented): The method of claim 35, wherein for each of the plurality of detection criteria there exists in the degraded digital content a group of neighboring points, wherein said adjusting means adjusts, for each group, each member of the group of neighboring points.

39. (previously presented): The method of claim 16 wherein the self-synchronizing degradation comprises intentional degradation.

40. (currently amended): An audio player for playing back an audio signal distributed through a network, which comprises: playback means for playing back the audio signal; and removing means for removing degradation data from an audio signal embedded with data using a

specific key, said degradation data being at a signal level which is audible to the human sense of

hearing.

41. (previously presented): The player of claim 40 wherein the degradation data

includes embedded data.

42. (previously presented): An audio distribution system including a distribution

apparatus for distributing an audio signal through a network and an audio player for playing back

said distributed audio signal, wherein said distribution apparatus comprises embedding means for

embedding in said audio signal degradation data of which a signal level is audible to the human

sense of hearing when the audio signal is played back; and wherein said audio player comprises

removing means for removing degradation data from said embedded audio signal using a

specific key.

43. (previously presented): An audio distribution method wherein a sending side process

an audio signal for distribution through a network and a receiving side plays back said audio

signal, which comprises: embedding degradation data in said audio signal at the sending side,

said degradation data having a signal level that is audible to the human sense of hearing when the

audio signal is played back; and removing degradation data from said embedded audio signal

using a specific key at playback.